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243 in favour of rice cultivation. The yield of rice, very much higher per acre than that of wheat or maize, the alternative cereal crops, enables a larger population to live in a restricted area. Furthermore, the climate of Ta Li (though not of the northern Min Chia areas) makes it possible to grow wheat and beans on the rice lands in winter, so that two crops a year can be harvested off the same land. A comparatively small holding of rice land, ten Chinese acres (*mu*) or an English acre and a half, is sufficient to support a family of five persons.[1] Consequently there was little incentive to undertake the cultivation of maize or fruit on the mountain sides while population still remained low, or fresh rice land in adjoining valleys was easily available. When these conditions ceased to apply the tradition of rice farming had secured so strong a hold upon the people that they preferred to emigrate to great distances rather than abandon their manner of life.

243 311 423 Other considerations have combined to enhance the value of rice land and reinforce the hold which the "rice standard" has obtained on the Min Chia mind. Since the area suitable for rice is limited, and was long ago brought under cultivation, good land has acquired a scarcity value, and this in turn has been enhanced by the universal will to ownership. The poor seek to buy land even at great sacrifice, the rich regard land purchase as the only safe investment. To be landless is regarded as a grave misfortune, and even to have to rent additional land is considered regrettable. It is of course true that in a community without banks or joint stock companies, land is the best investment, indeed the only really safe one. Land will survive most calamities. Fire may destroy merchandise or a hoard of treasure, and insur-

804 [1] The *Mu* or Chinese Acre by which land all over China is measured, is not, however a fixed unit. The *Mu* varies slightly in every district, and even in different villages. In Yunnan the equivalent of $\frac{1}{7}$ of an English acre to the *Mu* is approximately correct for the Ta Li district.

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243 beds, an arduous task for which all the labour of the village, men and women, is needed. Once the transplanting is over, the crop, apart from a little weeding, is left to grow until it matures in October. The harvest at Ta Li is usually ripe by the beginning of November, when the fields are drained, and the crop gathered. One kind of rice, which has become popular in recent years owing to its higher yield, is called "Tiao Ku," "Dropping rice" because the grain falls very readily when ripe, and therefore has to be threshed in the fields and cannot be carried back to the farm house. Large baskets are taken out to the fields and the grain is beaten out into them as the sheaves are reaped. The usual method with other kinds of rice is to bring the sheaves back to the village where they are threshed on a prepared floor with the flail. The rice is then taken to the mill to be husked, or stored
[376] until required. Husking is always done at a water mill on the Ta Li plain, as the abundant water power makes the use of the treadmill found in other parts of Yunnan unnecessary.

804 In the vicinity of Ta Li it is calculated that in a normal year one *mu* yields from ten to twelve Chinese pecks or *tou* of rice. The *tou*, like other weights and measures in Yunnan varies from one [illegible] to the next, for though it is always made up of ten *sheng* measures, these in turn contain a varying number of rice bowls, which being the only constant measure are the best standard for comparison. The following table sets out the measures as used in the Ta Li district and their equivalents in English measures.

Measures and weights compared

12 bowls = 1 *sheng* = 9 lb avoirdupois
120 bowls = 1 *tou* = 90 lb ,,

243 One sixth of an English acre (one *mu*) produces on average ten *tou* or 900 lbs of rice. If it be calculated that each member of a family consumes daily eight bowls of rice (four at

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be much dryer and less wooded than the western face, where the monsoon rains strike. The path, which is difficult enough for the animals on the climb, becomes much worse on the descent. Only a Yunnan-bred mule or pony would face a descent of broken stone steps, steep, set at all angles, often slippery with wet mud from some oozing stream, and the animal fully laden with loads weighing up to two hundred pounds. Yet they very rarely fall, picking their way from stone to stone, jumping a mud hole, or wading gingerly through the discoloured waters of a stream. This descent may take from two to three hours, about seven or eight miles, and leads to the last section of the stage, the final two or three miles across the cultivated valley to the small town or village which is the stage point.

Sometimes, even on the main routes, as for instance on the road to Bhamo four days west of Hsia Kuan, there is a long stretch of uninhabited mountain country with no cultivated valleys or villages. Here, after toiling all day up and down wooded ranges the caravans must rest for the night at some tiny collection of huts on the mountain side. Even on the most frequented roads it is rare to see any habitations after the valley is left behind, except perhaps at the midday halting place where there are a few teahouses and food stalls. Distances are long, roads execrable, the country deserted (and formerly full of robbers), the inns, when the day is done, dirty and dilapidated. The scenery and the climate are superb, but the inhabitants, accustomed to them from childhood, see no pleasure in travelling.

Distances in China are measured by the *li*, which is approximately one-third of the English mile. As is often the case with peasants in mountain lands, the measure is a variable unit depending on the nature of the road. Thus, in flat country, a *li* is really about one-third of a mile. Ta Li

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804 to Hsia Kuan is always said to be thirty *li*, along the plain,
491 and is ten miles in fact. When a muleteer says that the day's stage is seventy *li*, which includes crossing a range, the real distance is not twenty-three miles or so, but more nearly nineteen or twenty. This is the average length of a stage, but often it is called eighty *li*, which means a full twenty miles or more, and the longest stage on the K'un Ming-Bhamo road, from Sha Ch'iao to P'u P'eng, midway between Ta Li and K'un Ming, is said to be one hundred *li*, and is in fact a full thirty miles. Muleteers always know the length of the stage, but they usually have no idea of the distance between intermediate points. If, after travelling for about half the day, one asks a muleteer how far it is to the stage point, he may reply forty *li*, or ten *li*, or fifteen, apparently unable to calculate broken distances.

491 Stage points are either small cities or villages, which in
485 wild country may be only a few houses. The administrative walled cities, *hsien*, are often not situated on the main roads, or do not form stage points if they are, but only midday halts. This may be because the muleteers prefer to avoid the seats of authority. The administrative cities are generally up to three days' journey apart, and the intermediate stage points are villages, some of which are only collections of inns living entirely on the transit trade. Inns are of two kinds, "horse inns" and "guest inns". The "horse inn" is what in western Asia is called a caravanserai, a large courtyard surrounded on three sides by stables, and a big room on the fourth side for the muleteers, with a loft for hay and fodder overhead. These inns are frequented only by the regular transport caravans, and can stable about a hundred horses a night. Guest inns are also built round courtyards, and often have two, the one at the back surrounded by stables for the riding and baggage horses of

The nomads Mewu

do not go beyond Ho-chou, Ning-hou and T'ao-chou to trade, but they do undertake longer journeys to famous places of pilgrimage. Some time in their lives most of them go to Kum-bum, more often to Labrang. Small groups of four or five tent nomads occasionally also go on pilgrimages to the large sacred cities of Inner Tibet, Lhasa and Shigatse. /38/

In the summer of 1936 all the Mewu-Fantzu undertook the two-to-three-days' pilgrimage to Labrang in order to see the Panchan-Lama, the spiritual head of the Lamaists, who happened to be there at the time. Individual tent nomads also accompany lamas and Living Buddhas on journeys into Inner Tibet.

Formal education is unknown among the tent nomads. The lamas alone are educated and versed in purely scholastic Tibetan knowledge. Only those laymen can read who were once lamas themselves, but for some reason laid aside the spiritual garb. All contracts and agreements are verbal.

The language of the tent nomads is the northeast Tibetan dialect of the former Tibetan province of Amdo. Some tent nomads speak a little Chinese, which they learn from Chinese and Mohammedan traders, with whom they do business. In counting and calculating they often use their rosaries; as yet they do not use the Chinese abacus. If they have complicated transactions, they seek help from a lama. They do not use special measuring rods. Cloth is measured in squares, the side of a square being equal to the width of the cloth strip. They have no particular square measure for their pastureland; hills, roads and brooks are their only boundaries. They measure oat fields in terms of a "day's work," i. e. the surface which can be ploughed in one day with one yak. Their unit of weight is the Chinese chin (pound) at 32 /sic/ liang (ounces). They try to approximate the weight determined by Chinese officials in He-tso. Sliding weights are measured with simple Chinese hand-scales and a stone. Capacity measures, like the Chinese tou (bushel), are not used because there are no products traded in this way.

The Mewu-Fantzu have adopted the Chinese calendar. (1) However, they do not themselves buy the Chinese calendar books; the scholarly lamas figure out the Chinese calendar for the people and /39/ post it on the temple gate, so that everyone will know whether

1. as have the Tibetans in general, Cf. Wadell 7), page 451.